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ABSTRACT

This book provides a synthesis of wide-ranging research on student attrition at American colleges and universities and outlines actions that institutions can and should take to reduce attrition. The key to effective retention is shown to lie in a strong commitment to quality education and the building of a strong sense of inclusive educational and social community on campus. Chapter 1 examines the dimensions and consequences of student departure from institutions of higher education and sets out the goals of the book. Chapter 2 explores the scope and patterning of student departure, looking at the entry and exit of individuals from institutions of higher education and group differences in rates of degree completion. Chapter 3 addresses the roots of individual departure, examining the specific reasons why individuals leave college. Chapter 4 advances a model of individual departure from higher education that sees as the major cause of student attrition the inability of students to make the transition to college and become incorporated into the institution's ongoing social and intellectual life. Chapter 5 explores the dimensions of institutional action, examining the definition of "dropout," the principles of effective retention, and appropriate retention policies for different types of institutions and students. Chapter 6 presents conclusions and directions for further research. Two appendixes examine the assessment of student departure and propose a model of doctoral student persistence. (Contains approximately 430 references.) (MDM)

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